

# A RECOVERY READER

A GUIDE FOR SPONSORS, STUDENTS & TEACHERS



SELECTED WRITINGS FROM  
**60 YEARS**  
OF 12-STEP RELATED  
ARTICLES, ESSAYS, &  
PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

[ANONYMOUSREVIEW.ORG](http://ANONYMOUSREVIEW.ORG)

# A Recovery Reader

**Studies in AA, the Steps and  
the Process of the Program**

FIRST EDITION  
MARCH 2011

[reader.anonymousreview.org](http://reader.anonymousreview.org)

Published in Cooperation with Oak & Lotus Publication

**EDITORS**

Joe A. and Rich T.

**CONTRIBUTORS**

Barefoot Bob H., Beth J., Fred S., Jack McC.  
Joe A., John H., Kate O., Kerry K.,  
Steve L., Ted D. and those who asked  
to be left truly anonymous.

**NONALCOHOLIC AUTHORS**

Dr. Harry M. Tiebout  
Emmet Fox  
Rocco A. Errico  
Victor Parachin

**WEBSITE AUTHORS FROM:**

sober.org  
barefootworld.net  
sponsormagazine.org  
anonymousreview.org  
primarypurposegroup.org

We have been unable to contact the original holders of the original primarypurpose-group.org website and no claim against their work is intended by inclusion in this volume. A new site holds the same name but is not the original source site. If anyone from that website can contact us, it would be much appreciated.

‘Mazing Adventures appears at various places in this book on the left hand page to force the next article to begin on a right hand page. Written by Joe A., Raleigh, NC.



This book is released under a Creative Commons, Attribution, Non-Commercial Use, Share Alike license. This means that you are given permission to duplicate the PDF or make photocopies as you

see fit, but may not alter the material. Individual articles may show the original copyright holder, who retains all rights to his/her work.

This document is available without charge through [reader.anonymousreview.org](http://reader.anonymousreview.org).

A link is provided for a printed version through [lulu.com](http://lulu.com) at the above website.

‘Mazing Adventures (formerly Adventures in Sponsorship) appear on the [anonymousreview.org](http://anonymousreview.org) website and is published here for the first time.

© 2011, Joe A., All Rights Reserved

Published by [anonymousreview.org](http://anonymousreview.org), Raleigh, NC  
in cooperation with Oak & Lotus Publications

Contents copyright 2011 by the individual authors. The electronic (PDF) copy of this document may be shared without charge provided no charge is made and the notices of source and copyright are retained. The print version may be photocopied and shared provided no charge is made other than the actual cost of making the copies.

Quotes from the book “Alcoholics Anonymous” copyright by the Alcoholics Anonymous World Service Organization, All rights reserved.

This guide may be downloaded without charge and in several formats from [anonymousreview.org](http://anonymousreview.org) and may be shared with others provided that no fees are charged other than the cost of duplication and delivery.

Released through Creative Commons Non-Commercial, Share Alike, and Full Attribution license.

Pass it on.

# Table of Contents

Intent of This Book .....	6	
<b>Drunks: A Poem</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>Where to Start</b>	<b>11</b>	
What Is Expected.....	13	
Congratulations .....	13	
What Is Expected.....	13	
Don't Drink Between Meetings .....	13	
Get a Big Book .....	13	
Go to Several Big Book Study Meetings.....	13	
Get a Home Group.....	13	
Get a Sponsor.....	13	
Do Service .....	13	
Tools of the Program.....	15	
Fellowship.....	15	
Meetings .....	15	
Groups.....	15	
The Phone.....	15	
Service.....	15	
Literature.....	15	
Sponsor .....	15	
A Temporary Sponsor.....	16	
Steps.....	16	
AA, Steps and Program.....	17	
What They Are and What They Are Not .....	17	
The Preamble.....	17	
The Big Book.....	17	
The Twelve Steps.....	18	
The Program.....	18	
The Fellowship.....	18	
The Literature.....	18	
The Twelve Traditions.....	18	
Understanding Anonymity .....	19	
The Insanity of Alcoholism.....	23	
What Does "Going to Any Lengths" Mean? .....	25	
<b>The Steps</b>	<b>29</b>	
Step Zero to Step One .....	31	
Beginning .....	31	
Step Zero.....	31	
Why Work the Steps? .....	32	
Four Questions.....	34	
Principles of Recovery.....	35	
Awakening to Principles.....	36	
The Dictionary Definition of "Principle" .....	36	
Traditions are Principles:.....	37	
Use of the Word Principle in the Big Book .....	37	
36 instances of "principle" in the Big Book .....	37	
A Definition of Alcoholism.....	40	
Brief Review of Steps 1, 2, & 3 .....	41	
Third Step Decision.....	41	
Fearless and Moral Inventory .....	43	
Do the Work and you get the result!.....	44	
Are You Ready To Take The 3rd Step Prayer?.....	45	
What Your Inventory is NOT .....	47	
A 4th Step Notebook.....	49	
Page One.....	49	
The Two Page Spread .....	49	
Column One: Names .....	49	
Column Two: Why Are They On Your List? .....	50	
Column Three: What It Affects .....	51	
On Sex .....	51	
Column Four: Watch This Space .....	52	
Assets.....	52	
Page 64 .....	52	
Gifts.....	52	
Judgment.....	53	
4th Step Prompts .....	54	
Resentment Prompts — People .....	54	
Resentment Prompts —		
Institutions.....	54	
Resentment Prompts — Principles .....	54	
Fear Prompts .....	55	
Sex Prompts .....	55	
The Sex ideal.....	55	
Prayers in the 4th Step: .....	56	
Sharing the Inventory .....	57	
Step Five.....	57	
The Secret Steps .....	59	
Step Six.....	59	
Step Seven.....	59	
Step Seven Worksheet .....	61	
What shortcomings? .....	61	
Willingness for Removal.....	61	
Describe your level of humility .....	62	
Humility? .....	62	
More about God.....	62	
Your Own Conception of God.....	63	
The Prayer .....	63	
The Full Prayer .....	64	
Prayer of Steps 3 and 7 .....	64	
Step 8 .....	65	
Focus on Others .....	65	
Into More Action .....	66	
Review .....	66	
Types of Amends .....	67	
Amend type (a) — People We Hate / Resent .....	67	
Amend type (b) — The People / Institutions / Owed Money .....	67	
Amend type (c) — Incidents of criminal offense .....	68	
Amend Type (d) — Incidents of Domestic Trouble .....	68	
Amend Type (e) — Wrongs We Can Never Fully Right .....	69	
Caution Where Others Are Concerned .....	69	
Step 9 .....	71	

Reading for Step Nine.....	71
Self-Correction.....	71
Restitution .....	72
Apology.....	72
Promises of Step Nine.....	73
Spot Check Inventory .....	74
<b>Spirituality</b>	<b>75</b>
Steps 10 and 11.....	77
Forgiveness – The Missing Step...8	78
Alcoholics are Resentment –Prone	78
Methods of Resentment Removal78	
What is Forgiveness .....	79
Who is the Keeper of Our Wrongs79	
Objectives of Forgiveness .....	80
Forgiving ourselves .....	80
Our “Right” to Forgive.....	80
The Big Book on Forgiveness.....	82
Harboring Resentments is Fatal ..82	
Eradicating Resentments.....	82
The Art of Forgiveness.....	83
Step Five.....	83
Step Eight.....	84
How to Forgive: Ten Guidelines..87	
By Victor M. Parachin *	
Educate Yourself about Forgiveness87	
Spend a Few Minutes Each Day	
Cleaning Your Thinking .....	88
Practice on Small Hurts.....	88
Challenge the "Shoulds" in Your	
Thinking.....	88
Understand That Resentment has a	
High Price Tag.....	88
Remember: Lack of Forgiveness is	
Giving Others Power over You.89	
Recognize the Ripple Effect of	
Harboring a Grudge.....	89
Bury the Grudge – Literally .....	89
Try Instant Forgiveness.....	89
Recall Repeatedly This One Vital	
Fact.....	90
Lord's Prayer & Forgiveness.....	91
by Rocco A. Errico	
Free Us from Our Offenses .....	91
Forgiveness Frees Us .....	91
Nature Doesn't Condemn.....	91
A Two-Way Street.....	91
"Wise as Serpents".....	92
"Pure as Doves".....	92
Self-Forgiveness, Too .....	92
"Pure in Heart" .....	92
The Sixth Attunement.....	93
Forgiveness .....	95

*Reprinted from The Sermon On the Mount, by Emmet Fox*

"Forgive Us Our Trespasses, as We	
Forgive Them that Trespass	
Against Us" .....	95
Parable of the Prodigal Son.....	99
The Parable in its Context.....	101
The Characters .....	102
The Son's Departure and Miserable	
Condition.....	102
The Way Back Home.....	103
What Happens Back Home? .....	103
The Teaching of the Parable in	
Christianity and Buddhism..104	
Problems with Prayer.....	107
For the Christian Objection.....107	
For the Non-Christian Objection107	
For the Non-Believer Objection 108	
Dictionary Definition of "Spiritual"	
.....	108
A Different Idea of God as an Higher	
Power.....	110
The Lord's Prayer .....	111
An Interpretation from the	
Aramaic.....	111
The Peace Prayer of St. Francis ..113	
<i>by Dr. Christian Renoux, Associate</i>	
<i>Professor of the University of</i>	
<i>Orleans, France</i>	
Original Text of the Peace Prayer113	
Origin of this Prayer .....	113
How to Not Meditate.....	115
Ways to Meditate.....	116
A Simple Beginning .....	116
The Meditation.....	117
Successful Meditation.....	117
Prayers from the Big Book.....119	
Third Step.....	119
Fourth Step.....	119
Resentment.....	119
Fear .....	119
Sex.....	119
Fifth Step.....	119
Sixth Step .....	119
Seventh Step.....	120
Eighth Step.....	120
Ninth Step.....	120
Tenth Step.....	120
Eleventh Step.....	120
Twelfth Step.....	120
But Remember... .....	121
Living in the Body of God.....123	

## Carrying the Message 127

AA Chronology .....	129
How the Big Book Was Put	
Together .....	139
Big Book Names & Dates.....151	
From the First 188 Pages of the Big	
Book .....	151
Preface 2Ed.....	151
Doctor's Opinion.....	151
Bill's Story (Bill Wilson) .....	151
There Is A Solution.....	152
More About Alcoholism .....	153
We Agnostics.....	153
How It Works .....	153
Into Action.....	153
To Wives .....	153
Family Afterward.....	153
To Employers.....	153
Vision For You.....	154
Doctor Bob's Nightmare.....	154
That Ain't in the Book!.....	157
The 37 Musts .....	163
109 Promises .....	167
Promises of Step Two .....	167
Promises of Step Three.....	169
Promises of Step Five.....	169
Promises of Step Eight.....	169
Promises of Step Nine.....	170
Promises of Step Ten .....	170
Promises of Step Eleven.....	170
Promises of Step Twelve.....	171
Sponsorship .....	173
<i>by Clarence Snyder, 1944</i>	
Preface .....	173
Personal Gains of Being a Sponsor	
.....	173
Source of Names .....	174
Is the Prospect a Candidate? .....	174
Who Should Become Members.174	
Presenting the Plan.....	174
Suggested Steps .....	175
Qualify as an Alcoholic.....	175
Tell Your Story* .....	175
Inspire Confidence in AA.....	175
Talk About "Plus" Values.....	175
Show Importance of Reading Our	
Book .....	175
Introduce Faith.....	175
Listen to His Story .....	176
Take to Several Meetings .....	176
Explain AA to Prospect's Family176	
Help Prospect Anticipate Hospital	
Experience.....	176

Consult Older Members in AA .....	176	Make Your Points .....	200	Hank Parkhurst.....	219
Zen and the Art of Sponsorship .....	177	Point #1 .....	200	The Twelve Steps.....	220
How to Not Know .....	177	point #2 .....	200	The Multolith Big Book.....	221
Essential Sponsorship.....	177	Point #3 .....	200	Clarence Snyder.....	222
Essential Improvisation.....	177	Some Questions to Identify the Need for Recovery .....	201	Separation from the Oxford Groups.....	223
Essential Zen.....	178	Question #1: .....	201	Evolution of Sponsorship.....	224
Over-prepare .....	178	Question #2 .....	201	The Explosive Growth of Membership.....	225
For New Sponsors.....	179	Question #3 .....	201	Rethinking Early Recovery Rates.....	226
What a Sponsor is Not.....	179	Question #4 .....	201	AA Traditions.....	228
A Sponsor is not Perfect.....	180	Question #5 .....	201	First Tradition.....	229
Successful Sponsorship .....	180	Question #6 .....	201	Second Tradition.....	229
For New Speakers .....	181	Interaction & Modules.....	201	Third Tradition.....	230
What Do You Say? .....	181	Engaging the Participants.....	202	<i>Application for Membership</i>	
Preparation.....	181	Contradiction.....	202	Fourth Tradition.....	232
Language.....	181	The Closing Segment.....	202	Fifth Tradition.....	233
Who Are You Talking To? .....	182	The Class Outline (Summary) .....	203	Sixth Tradition.....	234
Get sober quickly.....	182	Sample Exchanges and Components .....	205	Seventh Tradition.....	234
The Beginning of Your Own Sobriety .....	182	More Sample Modules .....	208	Eighth Tradition.....	235
Benefits .....	182	Before AA .....	208	Ninth Tradition.....	235
Tools Steps and Service.....	183	Religion and Alcoholism .....	208	Tenth Tradition.....	236
Afterwards .....	183	The “Why?” of Alcoholism.....	209	Eleventh Tradition.....	237
The Three Talks.....	183	Washingtonians .....	210	Twelfth Tradition.....	237
Emptying your Cup.....	183	Psychiatry.....	211	A Very Short History of Drugs in the United States.....	239
12 Step Programs Directory .....	185	Emmanuel and the Jacoby Club .....	212		
AA Book List.....	189	The Oxford Groups .....	213		
AA Websites .....	191	The Oxford Group System .....	214		
<b>A Newcomers Class 193</b>		The Four Absolutes .....	214		
A Classroom Model to Carry the Message.....	195	The Five Cs .....	214		
Components and Resources.....	195	The Practices.....	214		
Engagement.....	196	AA Path.....	214		
Structure .....	196	More on the Oxford Groups .....	216		
The Opening Block.....	199	Friction with the Oxford Groups .....	216		
Sample Opening Block.....	199	Birth of the Big Book.....	217		
		Big Book Development .....	218		

*Portions of this book have been reprinted in Sponsor Magazine.  
sponsormagazine.org*

***WARNING: Travel beyond this point without a Sponsor is not advised.***

## Intent of This Book

This book is intended to be used:

- a) to serve as a personal enrichment course-in-a-book on Recovery and AA History.
- b) for a Sponsor who shares this information with someone they are attempting to help.
- c) to create a new class as appropriate to your area's needs and opportunity by taking the suggestions and materials to assemble or revise as you see fit.

It is not presented as the "only" way to do the work of sharing the Program, but is synthesis of work by over thirty authors over the past half century plus of effective AA recovery.

This document is intended to be shared and may be downloaded in whole, in sections, or by individual articles through:

[reader.anonymousreview.org](http://reader.anonymousreview.org).

It may be shared so long as no fees are charged for the electronic file and that the associated credits, copyrights, and notices remain with the file.

The home page also provides a link to order a printed copy from a print-on-demand service. Print-on-demand is an outside service intended for convenience and price to compare with the printer, ink, and paper for printing out the pages of this document, or the costs of photocopies.

# The Steps

Alcoholics Anonymous is a program of action, and the Twelve Steps are the Program we have followed to attain and maintain Sobriety.

Through the Steps we have the simple and direct action necessary to help us not pick up a drink or any other mind-altering substance outside of direct Medical supervision.

Through the Steps we find the way to deal with the guilt, shame, remorse, and fear that rises when we have stopped medicating ourselves with alcohol (and often with other substances and behaviors).

Through the Steps we learn to face and heal our pasts to give us time in the present to enjoy our lives, to become contributing members of our families and communities, and to live without the Fear that formerly drove our lives.

Through these Steps we achieve a Spiritual Awakening.



# Step Zero to Step One

## Beginning

This book assumes you have already passed through Step Zero and Step One. If you have not yet explored the First Step, set this book aside until you have completed Step One and are convinced that you are an alcoholic.

Step Zero is that point where you understand that your Problem, as shown through excessive drinking and/or drugging, has got to stop. This is not a Step from the Big Book, but everyone we have encountered who has succeeded with finding and maintaining Sobriety reports that they reached this point.

## Step Zero

For most of us, Step Zero has been “This must STOP!”

It is not required that even the desire for Sobriety to begin. That can come later.

How can you want Sobriety? How can you want something that was not part of your life before? How many people do you party with who were sober? If you had a period of sobriety from one of the many methods available, or even from a previous exposure to the Twelve Steps, but went back to drinking, how much of your experience was a real connection to be Sober?

You do not have to want Sobriety to begin. You only need to know Step Zero. At this point it is only necessary that you know your life cannot continue on as it has. You do not need to know the

new way yet, but only be convinced that the old way must stop, no matter what!

At this point most alcoholics begin a long struggle to stop on their own – and to stay stopped. In the Big Book this is well described in the chapter “More about Alcoholism”:

*“Here are some of the methods we have tried:*

*“Drinking beer only, limiting the number of drinks, never drinking alone, never drinking in the morning, drinking only at home, never having it in the house, never drinking during business hours, drinking only at parties, switching from scotch to brandy, drinking only natural wines, agreeing to resign if ever drunk on the job, taking a trip, not taking a trip, swearing off forever (with and without a solemn oath), taking more physical exercise, reading inspirational books, going to health farms and sanitariums, accepting voluntary commitment to asylums we could increase the list ad infinitum.”*

*- Page 31, Alcoholics Anonymous*

Since the time when that was written, we have added professional treatment centers, drugs to keep you “sober,” therapies, workshops, books, classes, tapes, CDs, websites, and support groups — along with those who oppose one or more of these approaches.

The program of Alcoholics Anonymous addresses these other methods in two of their traditions:

Tradition Nine: AA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

Tradition Ten: Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

Throughout AA Literature they acknowledge that the Twelve Steps are not the only way to achieve and maintain Sobriety. For some people those other techniques have worked.

Some problem drinkers have simply set their minds to Sobriety, found the battle alone, and won. Others have gone back to church, stopped drinking, and lived new, sober, and successful lives. Some have gone to therapy, found sobriety, and lived healthy, successful lives.

But people in AA know the other side of that reality — we have seen people who have come, achieved success to the point of taking years of Recovery, only to allow their old ways of thinking drag them back down to insanity, institutions, and death.

And death is not the worst thing that can happen when anyone goes back to drinking.

When Step Zero has been achieved, years of struggle can end in disaster.

At that point, you have the choice to try another method, or (if you feel your problem and your life is as we describe it) you may then choose to join us and work the Steps.

## Why Work the Steps?

Step One is difficult. It is a merciless admission that goes against everything an alcoholic has believed about his or her mastery of life.

Many people fight admitting that they are in the grip of a disease and mental compulsion that they cannot consciously master. Despite all evidence they have before them, the true alcoholic believes

that with more strength, with more will, with more determination, they will one day be able to control their drinking and return to drinking without the problems and consequences.

*“Many pursue this delusion to the gates of insanity or death!” –*

*- Page 30*

Until they admit to their innermost selves that if they take a single drink, they cannot guarantee how long they will drink, how much they will drink, what they will do while drunk, or where they will come to when they wake up.

*“Lack of power, that is our dilemma.”*

*- Page 45*

The powerless of this dilemma makes Step One require a great deal of work, made more difficult by the fact that we do not have the authority to declare any man or woman to be an alcoholic.

*“We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself, step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. It will not take long for you to decide, if you are honest with yourself about it. It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition.”*

*Page 31*

The First Step requires something simple and very difficult — the new man or woman must admit to themselves if the conditions of Step One are true. This means you must become honest enough to admit that these conditions are already true.

- *Have you reached Step Zero?*
- *Have you tried everything within your power to get sober and to stay sober?*
- *Is your life, with or without alcohol, unmanageable? This means the results of your best thoughts, plans, efforts, and*

*actions have been tried and the results have been completely unmanageable by you.*

We do know that people who find AA (and not everyone knows about Alcoholics Anonymous) who stay and who actually do The Work of the Twelve steps, do recover.

Even if they don't believe it will work.

Even if they don't like it.

Even if they don't understand it.

Even if they are uncomfortable doing The Work.

Even if they are not Religious.

Even if they don't find the Spirituality others would approve of.

Even if they use the AA Group itself as their Higher Power.

Even if they suffer great reversals in health, love, and finances.

Even if they find great success in health, love, and finances.

Even if they have no idea of what a "spiritual life" might be.

Even if you lived what you thought was a deeply "spiritual life" but returned to drinking and the dark despair that comes with relapse.

Even if you believe there is no hope.

The Twelve Steps do not require that you believe recovery is even possible when you come through the door.

You only need to know that this cannot continue the way you have gone.

You might come in because of a threat from a spouse, or a judge, or a doctor, or an employer.

It doesn't matter.

Show up. Come to see if what we have can help you. Come to see if you are really an alcoholic — or not.

If you decide you are an alcoholic and have seen people with recovery the way you would like to have it, do the Steps.

Do The Work, even if you don't think it will work for you. The Twelve Steps work.

Period.

## Four Questions

Only you can decide whether or not you are an alcoholic, although some professionals may offer very strong opinions on the subject.

There are four questions for you to answer to determine if you are an Alcoholic:

1. When you take a drink, can you control how many drinks you will have?
2. When you take a drink, can you control how long the spree will last?
3. When you take a drink, can you control what you will do while drunk?

4. Has the question of whether or not you are an alcoholic come up more than once?

For most alcoholics the answer to the first three questions will be “no,” and the answer to #4 will be “yes.”

If you now know that you are an Alcoholic, or even find that you simply have “the desire to stop drinking,” you qualify as a member of AA.

# Principles of Recovery

(The steps are printed on pages 59 & 60 of the Big Book.)

Step 1. – Surrender. (Capitulation to hopelessness.)

Step 2. – Hope. (Step 2 is the mirror image or opposite of step 1. In step 1 we admit that alcohol is our Higher Power, and that our lives are unmanageable. In step 2, we find a different Higher Power who we hope will bring about a return to sanity in the management of our lives.)

Step 3. – Commitment. (The key word in step 3 is decision.)

Step 4. – Honesty. (An inventory of self.)

Step 5. – Truth. (Candid confession to God and another human being.)

Step 6. – Willingness. (Choosing to abandon defects of character.)

Step 7. – Humility. (Standing naked before God, with nothing to hide, and asking that our flaws—in His eyes—be removed.)

Step 8. – Reflection. (Who have we harmed? Are we ready to amend?)

Step 9. – Amendment. (Making direct amends/restitution/correction, etc.)

Step 10. – Vigilance. (Exercising self-discovery, honesty, abandonment, humility, reflection, and amendment on a momentary, daily, and periodic basis.)

Step 11. – Attunement. (Becoming as one with our Father.)

Step 12. – Service. (Awakening into sober usefulness.)

You may have good reason to believe the above distillation could be improved upon. Do it! The purpose of this activity is to sharpen up our thinking about the nature of AA recovery. Honest inquiry and loving debate are essential to deep learning.

Principles of the TRADITIONS: Perhaps you should take a shot at these if you wish. Let us know what you come up with.

And Down to Business. Now for the fun. We have uncovered 36 instances of the word principle in the Big Book. From these we have discovered 31 principles of AA recovery. You may have noticed that in eight instances we are talking specifically about "spiritual principles".

But the "principles" addressed thus far are but a few of the principles that should guide our lives. For example:

Patience, tolerance, understanding, and love are the watchwords.

Big Book, page 118 line 13

These are the four additional principles we once affectionately called PLUT (Patience, Love, Understanding, and Tolerance).

You are going to have an exciting time identifying AA's principles. It is suggested that you and some friends start with the first printed page in the Big Book, and that you each read a paragraph while the others ask themselves if the paragraph contains any basic action guidelines for

recovery from alcoholism. If so, write them down. You may wish to use the following candidates to get started:

## Awakening to Principles

Here in Southern California most AA groups read the first 77 lines of Big Book chapter 5, How It Works, at the beginning of their meetings. While reading the 12 steps one encounters...

12. *Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

*Big Book, page 60, line 3*

Some of us have asked, "What are these principles?" Anticipating this to be anything but a trivial question, we searched the book for the word principle. It must be important to the program of recovery because it is used 36 times. Appendix II displays all 36 references.

Definition of Principle. Thus aroused, we have explored. The next thing we did was to investigate the definition of principle in our dictionary. Definitions were extracted from Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition, published in 1935. It should be a reliable source for word usage as understood over 50 years ago by the authors of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, which was first published in April, 1939.

## The Dictionary Definition of "Principle"

**Principle**, *n fr ...Latin principium beginning, foundation...*

2. *A source, or origin; that from which anything proceeds; fundamental substance or energy; primordial; ultimate basis or cause....*
4. *A fundamental truth; a comprehensive law or doctrine from which others are derived, or on which others are founded; a general truth; an elementary proposition or*

*fundamental assumption; a maxim; an axiom; a postulate.*

5. *A settled rule of action; a governing law of conduct; an opinion, attitude or belief which exercises a directing influence on the life and behavior; a rule (usually a right rule) of conduct consistently directing one's actions...*

One might distill these definitions of principle down to basic rules of action. However, some of our members are opposed to rules, so we adopted the following short definition:

*"a principle is a basic action guideline"*

Searching the Big Book on the word "Principle", what are the principles of the AA program of recovery? Five of the 36 uses of the word principle are clearly statements of principles: Numbers 1 through 36 below refer to the order in which the statement appears)

- 22) *The first principle of success is that you should never be angry.*

*Big Book, page 111, line 1*

Although we alcoholics are not saints, it seems the authors of the Big Book thought that our spouses should be. It is obvious that this principle is avoiding anger.

- 28) *Another principle we observe carefully is that we do not relate intimate experiences of another person unless we are sure he would approve.*

*Big Book, page 125, line 18*

This principle is that we respect the privacy of others, especially fellow members of AA.

- 29) *Giving, rather than getting, will become the guiding principle.*

*Big Book, page 128, line 2*

We practice service of others rather than self-service.

- 35) & 36) *There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against*

*all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance—that principle is contempt prior to investigation.*

—HERBERT SPENCER *Big Book, Appendix II, page 570, lines 16 & 19 (The principle for us is open mindedness.)*

These are the five easy ones. Another of our 36 examples contains three principles:

25) *Your new courage, good nature and lack of self-consciousness will do wonders for you socially. The same principle applies in dealing with the children. Big Book, page 115, line 20 (Our relationships with others will be vastly improved when we display courage and good nature, just as when we do not display self-consciousness.*

Five additional examples make direct reference to the steps and traditions of AA as being principles:

The STEPS of AA are principles (and a listing of these appears soon):

9) 12. *Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs...*

*Big Book, page 60, line 3*

10) *No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles.*

*Big Book, page 60, line 8*

11) *The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.*

*Big Book, page 60, line 9*

### Traditions are Principles:

1 & 2) *As we discovered the principles by which the individual alcoholic could live, so we had to evolve principles by which the AA groups and AA as a whole could survive and function effectively.*

*Big Book, page xix, lines 8 & 9*

3) *Though none of these principles had the force of rules or laws, they had become so widely*

*accepted by 1950 that they were confirmed by our first International Conference held at Cleveland.*

*Big Book, page xix, line 27*

Thus far we may have uncovered 31 of AA's principles. Four were the easy uses of the word principle in examples 22, 28, 29, and 36. Three more were found in 25, and there are the 12 steps and 12 traditions, each being a principle.

### Use of the Word Principle in the Big Book

#### 36 instances of "principle" in the Big Book.

1 & 2) *As we discovered the principles by which the individual alcoholic could live, so we had to evolve principles by which the AA groups and AA as a whole could survive and function effectively.*

*Big Book, page xix, lines 8 & 9*

3) *Though none of these principles had the force of rules or laws, they had become so widely accepted by 1950 that they were confirmed by our first International Conference held at Cleveland.*

*Big Book, page xix, line 27*

4) *The basic principles of the AA program, it appears, hold good for individuals with many different life-styles, just as the program has brought recovery to those of many different nationalities.*

*Big Book, Foreword to the Third Edition*

5) *My friend had emphasized the absolute necessity of demonstrating these principles in all my affairs.*

*Big Book, page 14, line 29*

6) *We feel elimination of our drinking is but a beginning. A much more important demonstration of our principles lies before us in our respective homes, occupations and affairs.*

*Big Book, page 19, line 7*

7) Quite as important was the discovery that spiritual principles would solve all my problems.

Big Book, page 42, line 2

8) That was great news to us, for we had assumed we could not make use of spiritual principles unless we accepted many things on faith which seemed difficult to believe.

Big Book, page 47, line 23

9) 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs...

Big Book, page 60, line 3

10) No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles.

Big Book, page 60, line 8

11) The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

Big Book, page 60, line 9

12) We listed people, institutions or principles with whom we were angry. We asked ourselves why we were angry.

Big Book, page 64, line 20

13) Although these reparations take innumerable forms, there are some general principles which we find guiding.

Big Book, page 79, line 6

14) Unless one's family expresses a desire to live upon spiritual principles we think we ought not to urge them.

Big Book, page 83, line 13

15) If not members of religious bodies, we sometimes select and memorize a few set prayers which emphasize the principles we have been discussing.

Big Book, page 87, line 26

16) The main thing is that he be willing to believe in a Power greater than himself and that he live by spiritual principles.

Big Book, page 93, line 10

17) When dealing with such a person, you had better use everyday language to describe spiritual principles.

Big Book, page 93, line 12

18) We are dealing only with general principles common to most denominations.

Big Book, page 93, line 12

19) Should they accept and practice spiritual principles, there is a much better chance that the head of the family will recover.

Big Book, page 97, line 29\

When your prospect has made such reparation as he can to his family, and has thoroughly explained to them the new principles by which he is living, he should proceed to put those principles into action at home.

Big Book, page 98, lines 26 & 28

22) The first principle of success is that you should never be angry.

Big Book, page 111, line 1

23) If you act upon these principles, your husband may stop or moderate.

Big Book, page 112, line 20

24) The same principles which apply to husband number one should be practiced.

Big Book, page 112, line 22

25) Your new courage, good nature and lack of self-consciousness will do wonders for you socially. The same principle applies in dealing with the children.

Big Book, page 115, line 20

26) Now we try to put spiritual principles to work in every department of our lives...

Big Book, page 116, line 30

27) Though it is entirely separate from Alcoholics Anonymous, it uses the general principles of the AA program as a guide for husbands, wives, relatives, friends, and others close to alcoholics.

Big Book, page 121, footnote line 3

28) Another principle we observe carefully is that we do not relate intimate experiences of another person unless we are sure he would approve.

*Big Book, page 125, line 18*

*Big Book, page 128, line 2*

30) *Whether the family has spiritual convictions or not, they may do well to examine the principles by which the alcoholic member is trying to live.*

*Big Book, page 130, line 21*

31) *They can hardly fail to approve these simple principles, though the head of the house still fails somewhat in practicing them.*

*Big Book, page 130, line 23*

32) *Without much ado, he accepted the principles and procedure that had helped us.*

*Big Book, page 139, line 5*

33) *The use of spiritual principles in such cases was not so well understood as it is now.*

*Big Book, page 156, line 33*

34) *Twelve—Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."*

*Big Book, Appendix I, page 564, line 32*

35) & 36) *"There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance— that principle is contempt prior to investigation."*

—HERBERT SPENCER

*Big Book, Appendix II, page 570, lines 16*

*Fred S., Raleigh, NC*

## A Definition of Alcoholism

"Alcoholism is a primary, chronic disease with genetic, psychosocial, and environmental factors influencing its development and manifestations. The disease is often progressive and fatal. It is characterized by continuous or periodic impaired control over drinking, preoccupation with the drug alcohol, use of alcohol despite adverse consequences, and distortions in thinking, most notably denial."

"Primary" refers to the nature of alcoholism as a disease entity in addition to and separate from other pathophysiologic states which may be associated with it.

"Primary" suggests that alcoholism, as an addiction, is not a symptom of an underlying disease state.

"Disease" means an involuntary disability. It represents the sum of the abnormal phenomena displayed by a group of individuals. These phenomena are associated with a specified common set of characteristics by which these individuals differ from the norm, and which places them at a disadvantage.

## Brief Review of Steps 1, 2, & 3

Having covered the information in pages xxiii through page 63 of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, we asked ourselves the following questions when taking the first three Steps.

Step 1 We admitted we were powerless over alcohol that our lives had become unmanageable.

- If, when I honestly want to, can I quit entirely (because of the mental obsession), or if when drinking, do I have little control over the amount I take (because of the physical allergy)?
- If you've answered "no" to the first part and "yes" to the second, you're probably alcoholic. If that be the case, you may be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer. (page 30)
- Drunk or sober (suffering from "untreated alcoholism"), do I have trouble with personal relationships? Can I control my emotional natures? Am I a prey to misery and depression? Can I make a living (a happy and contented life)? Do I have a feeling of uselessness? Am I full of fear? Am I unhappy? Do I find that I can't seem to be of real help to other people? (page 52)
- Do I fully concede to my innermost self that I am alcoholic? (page 44)

Step 2 Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

- Do I now believe, or am I even willing to believe, that there is a Power greater than myself? (page 47)
- Do I have a conception of that Power which makes sense to me? (page 46)
- When we became alcoholics, crushed by a self-imposed crisis we could not postpone or evade, we had to fearlessly face the proposition that either God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is or He isn't. What is my choice to be? (page 53)

Step 3 Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

### Third Step Decision

*"Next, we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children."*

*Big Book, page 62*

To affirm this decision, we say the Third Step Prayer:

"God, I offer myself to Thee—to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!"

Big Book, page 63, Step 4

In the Third Step we decided to turn our thoughts and actions over to the care of God. The way we carry out that decision is by taking the actions of Steps 4 through 9. We found in Chapter 4, “We Agnostics”, that God dwells deep down within us. We’ve been blocked from God’s Power

because of our own self-will – our character defects and shortcomings (i.e. selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, fear, guilt, shame, remorse, anger, etc.) The first step of getting us “unblocked” is Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

*Step 4 - from the booklet "Simple Directions"<sup>1</sup>*

## Fearless and Moral Inventory

The AA Steps owe a great deal of their structure to the six steps of the original Oxford Group, a Christian fellowship dedicated to the ideal fellowship of the First Century church.

When asked about The Oxford Group's "Steps", Bill W. broke them into six and wrote the following scrap to explain their process:

insert step graphic

Our Steps 4 through 9 are a clarification of the Oxford Group's simple Step Four "Make Amends". The expansion was intended to break down the process to allow an alcoholic to do each part of the process and do it as thoroughly as possible.

If you have made it to Step Three, your sponsor and your meetings will confirm that the next Step is to be taken immediately. In the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, the direction begins in Chapter Five, at the bottom of page 63.

"Next we launched out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted."

It is the intent of this guide to help make a searching and moral inventory as guided by the book.

Steps One, Two, and Three did not create the problem — they are the statements of truth regarding your disease and your situation. They

are the beginning of the leveling of pride and ego, which we are told will become a lifelong process. In each of these steps you begin the difficult process of telling the truth.

You did not become an alcoholic because you admitted to Step One. You simply admitted what was already true.

You did not create a Higher Power through Step Two; you simply admitted to the truth that you are not God or the Higher Power of your personal understanding.

In Step Three you do not achieve anything beyond taking that deep breath to begin The Work of recovery.

"The Work" is often referenced in AA meetings, but sometimes people can go for years without knowing what "The Work" is. For simplicity, let us take a moment to define "The Work" for your own progress.

The Big Book is clearly divided between the basic text of the front (Cover through Page 164, or Page 181 to include Dr. Bob's Nightmare, depending on who you are talking to) and the stories in the back.

But upon closer examination we find a second structure in the book. The area from the Cover through Page 52 is a summary for Step One — defining alcoholism and the alcoholic, with an introduction to the spiritual nature of our disease.

---

<sup>1</sup> "Simple Directions" is available as a free download from [directions.anonymousreview.org](http://directions.anonymousreview.org), and may also be purchased as a separate booklet through the link on that web page.

On Page 52 (although discussion of the meat of Step Two has already begun), there is a paragraph that gives the summation of “our lives had become unmanageable.” It is sometimes called The Bedevilments\*.

The previous pages discuss the changes seen in the 1930s as the result of technological progress. The authors and early members of our fellowship all came from a time when “man will never fly” had been changed to include regularly scheduled flights to China from San Francisco. They had seen horses and carriages give way to automobiles. They had seen communications move from newspapers and telegraphy to newsreels, movies, radio, and telephones.

The paragraph on Page 52 says:

*“We had to ask ourselves why we shouldn’t apply to our human problems this same readiness to change the point of view. We were having trouble with personal relationships, we couldn’t control our emotional natures, we were a prey to misery and depression, we couldn’t make a living, we had a feeling of uselessness, we were full of fear, we were unhappy, we couldn’t seem to be of real help to other people - was not a basic solution of these bedevilments\* more important than whether we should see newsreels of lunar flight? Of course it was.”*

*Big Book, Page 52*

At each of the statements it is best to pause, to ask if that part of the paragraph applies to you.

- Were you having trouble with personal relationships?
- Were you able to control your emotions?
- Were you prey to misery and depression?
- Could you make a living?
- Were you full of fear?
- Were you unhappy?
- Were you able to be of real help to other people?

- Do you see that your solution of these bedevilments is more important than other pursuits?

The Bedevilments on Page 52 are the end of Step One and the opening to the work of Step Two.

On page 88 you are at the end of Step Eleven.

Page 89, the chapter “Working with Others” is the beginning of Step Twelve, which continues through the rest of the book, including the stories in the back. Those stories are people sharing their Experience, Strength, and Hope with you as their Twelve Step call on you.

The 36 pages from page 52 to page 88 contain Steps Two through Step Eleven. These pages, these Steps, are “The Work.”

## Do the Work and you get the result!

You are the only one who can say if you are willing to move forward, but as with the rest of your work in the Twelve Steps, it is best to have an advisor, a “native guide” for the new territory – a Sponsor.

Understand that many of the men and women with double-digit sobriety report that they have not seen anyone start a Fourth Step and hesitate before beginning their amends in Step Nine and stay sober!

The process requires completion. Alcoholics are great beginners, but not so good on finishing what they start. If you make the commitment, then take the action and the results will follow. Finish this process!

You will never feel finished. The book tells us this is “the beginning of a lifelong process,” but it also tells us that this way of life is “a design for living that really works.”

It is suggested that you follow the direction of your sponsor. If you are not using a sponsor, it is important that you have someone who can guide

you — do not attempt this process on your own. You can never see your eye with that same eye. You must use a mirror, and your sponsor is your mirror.

- The pressure built by performing the Inventory can only be reduced through the thorough examination and organization of what comes out of it. Your sponsor will help you organize and prioritize the results — what is revelation, what is ego, what is fear, what is pride, and what is an asset.
- Through the Fifth Step you will come to see yourself, possibly for the first time.

In the Sixth Step you will realize what parts of you are either defective, or which are lacking, and become willing to have those defects and shortcomings removed.

In the Seventh Step you will take the same deep breath you took in Step Three to turn everything over to the Higher Power which you have come to believe. You will not tell that Higher Power what is to be removed or to be kept — you simply ask to have everything that stands in the way of your service to others removed.

In Step Eight you will return to this inventory (most people add to the list begun in Step Four) to determine how you and your disease have damaged the people, institutions, and relationships around you. You will find that (if you are to stay sober) you are willing to do whatever is required to make those damages heal, or at least make it better.

In Step Nine you will step back into the world to heal the damage of your past and establish a new foundation for life without the weight and the guilt, the shame, the fear, and the selfishness of your past.

But none of this can begin without the thorough housecleaning required on Page 63 and 64 of the Big Book.

Prepare yourself for this process. Discuss your fears with your Sponsor. Gather your materials and begin.

### Are You Ready To Take The 3rd Step Prayer?

*“God I offer myself to Thee — to build with me and do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy power, Thy love, and Thy way of life. May I do Thy will always!”<sup>2</sup>*

Remember, the next paragraph on Page 63 says “The wording, of course, is quite optional.” It is important that you mean what you pray. If you can take the words as presented and come to mean them, the prayer as written can work for you.

If, however, you find it hard to relate to the words as written, if you do not use “Thee” and “Thine” as part of your normal language, you can take the prayer and restate it in your own words so that you can say a heartfelt prayer of surrender and willingness to proceed with your Recovery.

#### An Important Note

The Big Book says at the end of Step 3 (emphasis added):

*“NEXT we launch out on a course of VIGOROUS action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted. Though our decision (Step 3) was a vital and crucial step (so it’s important), it could have LITTLE PERMANENT EFFECT (it doesn’t amount to much) unless AT ONCE (immediately or now) followed by a STRENUOUS EFFORT to face (where we face*

---

<sup>2</sup> See “The Full Prayer” for an expansion of this suggested prayer, but remember the following paragraph tells us that the wording is optional and as is your way of saying a prayer.

*these things is in Steps 4 - 6), AND to be rid of (where we get rid of these things is in Steps 7 - 9), the things in ourselves which had been blocking us (we can't turn our will and our lives over to the care of God until we get unblocked from doing so by immediately and quickly working Steps Four through Nine). Our liquor was but a symptom. So we had to get down to causes and conditions.*

#### Preparation

Before he died, Dr. Bob told Bill “Keep it Simple.” You can follow that in your Inventory.

The first thing you need to do is talk with your sponsor. Does your sponsor agree that you are ready to take this next step? Go through this booklet with your sponsor to be sure that he, or she, agrees with the process it presents. Your sponsor may have used a different system and if anything is found in these pages that are in conflict with your sponsor, go with the direction your sponsor gives you. Your sponsor knows you better than the authors of this booklet!

Get a notebook to dedicate to your Inventory. It can be a simple spiral bound notebook, a composition book or other empty volume. You can usually find good ones in dollar stores, or you might have one left over from a previous “good intention” attempt at the Steps which is still blank and usable.

Get two or three reliable pens or pencils with you. The excuses “my pen stopped working” or “my pencil broke” will not be available.

Have your own copy of the Big Book and, if your sponsor agrees, a copy of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

Your sponsor may suggest a certain number of sessions per week — 20-60 minutes committed in

advance. Your schedule may only allow one session per week or even time every day — make this decision with your sponsor.

Try to find a place where you can concentrate on the work at hand. It should be quiet — free of distractions but you will hear of people who worked at their inventories while the kids made noise elsewhere in the house, or sitting in their car at a lake or wooded spot, or sitting in a coffee shop, or a public library, or even a special “writing” meeting occasionally offered by individual AA groups. You will find you can complete your Inventory if your commitment is to finish and is not dependent on some condition you set before you begin.

When you sit down to write, be comfortable and take a few moments to be quiet. Pray and meditate as you feel is appropriate — you may be able to find the quiet you need in a few moments, or you may need ten or twenty minutes of prayer and meditation to begin.

Don’t try to decide in advance what you should or should not write down. If you think of it, write it down.

If you are writing an inventory after a relapse, talk to your sponsor. Most sponsors tell a returning member of AA not to depend on the previous inventory (or inventories). The issues raised on those previous inventories were not handled by someone who stayed sober.

Remember, we can write too little for our Inventory, but we can never write too much.

### **What Your Inventory is NOT**

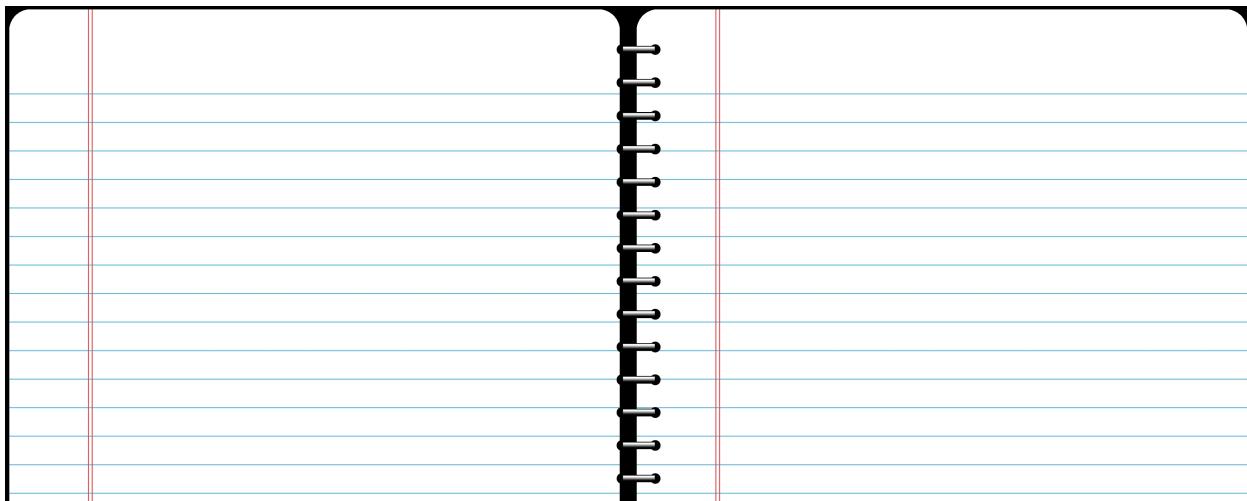
Your Inventory is not a long narrative to explain everything. Your sponsor may (or may not) approve of you writing such a narrative as part of your recovery, but that is not your Inventory. The Inventory is clearly shown in the Big Book and this guide is to help you complete that process.

You may not like, agree with, understand, or want to do some of this work. We do not care what you like, agree with, understand, or want to do. We care what you do! What you like, agree with, understand, or want to do is what brought you here.

This is the work you must do to stay sober. As the shoe company ad says — “Just do it!”



## A 4th Step Notebook



### Page One

Open the notebook and on the first page write your name, how to contact you, and whatever else your Sponsor feels you should put on that page. Sometimes that can include the date of sobriety, or a request that anyone finding your notebook not read it — almost everyone doing an Inventory chooses to keep their unfinished inventory under lock and key.

### The Two Page Spread

When you open the notebook you have a two page spread in front of you. Use that to your advantage.

On the right side, draw a line approximately in the middle.

On the right side, use the basic red-line margin as your first column.

You will do several sections of the inventory, but under each section you will follow the same

format. On each section you work down the column, not across.

Take that deep breath again, become calm, and put your pencil to the paper.

### Column One: Names

On the left side of the red margin, write the first name of the person who appears on your Inventory. Work down, not across.

Write a name, skip a line, write a name, skip a line, write a name, ... It does not matter how much you feel about this person, institution, or situation — write a name, skip a line, write a name, skip a line.

If you have someone special that you have a lot to write about — write a name, skip a line, write a name, skip a line, write a name, ...

That is not a suggestion — that is a direction. You will see why we do this in the next stage.

You will do several lists. You will list your resentments. You will list your fears. You will list your sexual misconduct.

For each section, you will write a name, skip a line, and write a name.

Some names may appear on more than one list.

When you can look at the list for 15 or 20 minutes and not come up with a new name, then you are ready to do the next column.

## Column Two: Why Are They On Your List?

When you have your list of names, you will be tempted to write a long narrative of how they have wronged you. Your sponsor may decide you should write such a narrative, but that is not your Inventory. That is a long narrative of how the world has wronged you, and it will not keep you sober!

For your inventory, you need to identify exactly why each of these names has appeared on your list, and do so in a clear and simple manner. Think of it as a report — “just the facts.” What would someone in that room have seen?

You may want to tell what someone else thought or wanted. Don’t do it. You do not know what someone else thought or wanted. Even if they told you, they might have been lying. You don’t know.

Why they are on your list should be considered and the shortest possible statement will cut to the core of your reaction to them and what they did, or that you may think they did.

Here is the example given on Page 65:

<i>I'm resentful at:</i>	<i>The Cause</i>	<i>Affects my:</i>
Mr. Brown	His attention to my wife. Told my wife of my mistress. Brown may get my job at the office.	Sex relations. Self-esteem (fear) Sex relations. Self-esteem (fear) Security.
Mrs. Jones	She's a nut—she snubbed me. She committed her husband for drinking. He's my friend. She's a gossip.	Personal relationship. Self-esteem (fear)
My employer	Unreasonable—Unjust — Overbearing — Threatens to fire me for drinking and padding my expense account.	Self-esteem (fear) Security.
My wife	Misunderstands and nags. Likes Brown. Wants house put in her name.	Pride—Personal sex relations—Security (fear)

Look closely at the sample from Page 65 in the Big Book. The name with the longest reason for being on the list uses only 19 words. We are learning to discipline ourselves and this is an exercise where you refrain from “explaining.” When you write more about why they are on your list, you begin explaining why they are wrong and why you were right, or the other way around.

No more than 19 words per name in the corresponding second column.

That is not a suggestion; that is a rule. You write a maximum of 19 words per name.

What matters is your perception, and what you thought and did. Short and sweet. Keep it simple.

In this example, the one who has the most written gets just 19 words. If we are following the directions, you should be able to state, in 19 words or less, exactly why they are on your list. When you write the reason for the name being on our list, you are to tell us what happened. This column is reporting — even the phrase like “she's a nut” might be allowed if that is why she is on your list, even if you aren’t qualified to make a determination of another person’s sanity.

Write no more than 19 words, no matter what.  
Do not explain; just say why they are on your list.

Don't rush it, but don't drag your feet.

Name	Why on the list (19 words MAXIMUM)
Mr. Brown	His attention to my wife; told my wife about my mistress; Brown may get my job at the office.
Mrs. Jones	she's a nut - snubbed me. She committed her husband for drinking, he's my friend. She's a gossip.
Employer (Name)	Unreasonable - Unjust - Overbearing. Threatens to fire me for drinking and padding my expense account.
Wife (Name)	Misunderstand and nags. Likes Brown. Wants house put in her name.
Ms. Mary (1st Grade)	Made fun of my voice in front of the class.
Becky	Laughed at me in front of my friends in cafeteria. Gave me the nickname "Squirrely"
Cousin Ralph	Had better toys than me, wouldn't share them or let me take any home.
Dr. Phiro	Told my parents about my test results before telling me,

### Column Three: What It Affects

Here is your chance to tell what that person, ideal, institution or situation threatened.

- Was it your personal standing or position?
- Your Pride?
- Your financial security?
- Your self-esteem?
- The way it caused other people to view you?
- Your sexual relationships?
- Your business relationships or friendships?
- Your legal position?
- Your criminal activities?

Do you have something that was affected that is NOT listed in the examples? Later in this booklet you will find a list of suggestions from the One Way Group in Los Angeles from around 1960. They may help you fill out your third column.

	Affects my ...
	sex relations, self-esteem (fear)
	Security
	Personal relationships, self-esteem (fear)
	Self esteem (fear), security
	Pride - Personal sex relations
	Security (fear)
	Pride, self-esteem, relationships with classmates.
	Pride, self-esteem, relationship with my friends.
	Greed, Pride, Envy, felt I did not deserve nice toys.
	Pride, fear, how my parents

### On Sex

You are expected to list your resentments, your fears, and your sexual conduct. You will also deal with people you have harmed (Step 8). Use the same format — write a name, skip a line, write a name (or some indicator), even if you can't think of the specific name of the person involved.

On page 70 the Big Book says:

*"To sum up about sex: We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the imperious urge, when to yield would mean heartache."*

## Column Four: Watch This Space

Column Four will take up the last column of your two-page spread. Leave this column blank until you get together with your sponsor for your Fifth Step.

### Assets

Following the directions means following all of the directions. For your inventory this will include your Assets.

A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking complete inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade.

### Page 64

The purpose of doing an inventory of your Assets is not to give you a chance to reduce the impact of your fears, your resentments, your sexual conduct, or the people you have harmed.

In the same way people may use the “Seven Deadly Sins” as a guide to their defects, it may be appropriate to use the “Seven Heavenly Virtues” in relation to your Assets. This is a simple list and may be outside your spiritual structure — it is intended as a focus for your Inventory. All of the world’s faiths and codes of ethics have similar lists of goals and positive attributes we try to achieve.

Chastity — This is not simply the maintaining of sexual virginity until marriage, but also your conduct in all areas of sex. Did you lie for sex, manipulate, cheat on your spouse, or otherwise place your personal desire over your behavior.

Temperance — This is not simply avoiding alcohol, which we have admitted to failure in our participation of our First Step. This idea is the ability to be moderate in all areas — food, righteousness, pride, sex, possessions, etc. Were you temperate in any of the areas of your life?

Charity — Did you care for others with your time, resources, and affections, or did you give to get? Was your generosity based on helping the other person or institution, or on what benefit you would receive in pride, goods, services, recognition, or reputation?

Diligence — Did you complete what you began? Did you complete work or projects only so far as your return was concerned? Do you have a long list of accomplishments or a trail of broken promises, of beginnings without completion?

Patience — Could you wait for things to turn out or did you push, become frustrated, manipulate, and demand? Was your patience complete or measured to the level of getting what you wanted?

Kindness — Were you kind to others? To strangers? To animals? To children — your own and others? Was your kindness followed with gossip or backbiting? Was it done to feel or show your superiority? Was the focus of your kindness on others or on yourself?

Humility — Were you able to go unrecognized and be satisfied that the right thing was done? Did you want or demand that people recognize your actions and that credit was not assigned to someone other than you?

### Gifts

Did you have Gifts? These would be abilities that just seemed to come easily to you in the way of talent, understanding, or intuition. Did you share those gifts for the benefit of others or did you use them to manipulate events to your own ends?

If you were given the gift of Leadership, did you use it to Lead and benefit those who would follow, or did you use it to grab as much as you could or get other people to do what you wanted them to do?

If you could Comfort, did you withhold that comfort until your target gave you what you wanted, or provided something you could use to satisfy your own greed or desire before you would use your gift?

Did you have talents in areas that brought benefit or comfort to others? Music? Counseling? Cooking? Organizing? Did you use these talents to your own ends or to the benefit of others?

Was your Asset something that was a benefit to those around you, or used as a weapon to control situations and people to feed your own desires?

Use a fresh page in your notebook and write a list of assets, gifts, talents, or abilities you feel you have been given. What have you been given the talent to do?

As you did with your Names, work down the column.

Beside each Asset, write how you have used it.

The purpose of knowing your Assets is to show where you have been given a gift, and where you have abused that gift in the course of your Alcoholism.

If you identify an Asset that you have used correctly — do not try to “fix” it! Be grateful and, when the time comes, be ready to turn that asset over to your Higher Power to allow it to benefit those you would help.

It is the nature of alcoholics in the throes of the disease to injure and abuse other people and to lessen and abuse themselves in the constant struggle for more of everything. We demanded more money, sex, power, prestige, possessions, or

satisfaction. But no matter how great our acquisitions, we were never satisfied.

We take more pride in our ability to be more defective than others and judge everything about ourselves as defective.

In the Ninth Step promises we are told:

“No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.”

Big Book, page 96

## Judgment

One of the most important lessons we learn is that our judgment of others, or ourselves, has been damaged by our disease. What we consider our most wonderful feature may turn out to be damaging to other people. We find that our worst history becomes our greatest asset in helping others.

At this point we not only need to work at our willingness to have our defects removed and our shortcomings corrected, but become willing to use our assets as they were intended – for the benefit of others – or to let them go.

Accepting that we have had assets, and that we have not used those assets properly is a final phase in becoming willing to have the Higher Power we found in Steps Two and Three take over everything in our lives.

Our defects. Our shortcomings. Our assets.

Everything!

## 4th Step Prompts

The directions for the 4th Step inventory are found on pages 64 – 72 of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous. Use page 65 as a model for the inventory process. The book suggests we inventory three areas of our lives – three manifestations of self: resentment, fear, and our conduct – with emphasis on sex.

Here is a list of people, institutions, and principles that may be helpful in your resentment inventory. Check the ones you are angry with, resent, or feel ill will toward. Add any additional names that are not on this list.

### Resentment Prompts — People

Father (Step)	Uncles	Creditors	Probation Officers
Mother (Step)	Cousins	Childhood Friends	AA Friends
Sisters (Step)	Clergy	School Friends	U.S. Service Friends
Brothers (Step)	Police	Teachers	
Grandmother	Lawyers	Life Long Friends	Plus others not listed
Grandfather	Judges	Best Friends	
In-Laws	Doctors	Acquaintances	
Husbands	Employers	Girl Friends	
Wives	Employees	Boy Friends	
Aunts	Coworkers	Parole Officers	

### Resentment Prompts — Institutions

Marriage	Law	Mental Health System
Bible	Authority	Philosophy
Church	Government	Nationality
Religion	Education System	
Races	Correctional System	Plus others not listed

### Resentment Prompts — Principles

God or Deity	Death	Adultery
Retribution	Life after Death	Golden Rule
Ten Commandments	Heaven	Seven Deadly Sins
Jesus Christ	Hell	
Satan	Sin	Plus others not listed

## Fear Prompts

God	Parents	Physical Pain	Hospitals
Dying	Losing a Wife	Fear	Responsibility
Insanity	Losing a Husband	Drowning	Feelings
Insecurity	Losing a Child	Men	Getting Old
Rejection	Animals	Women	Hurting Others
Loneliness	Insects	Being Alone	Violence
Diseases	Police	People	Writing Inventory
Alcohol	Jail	Crying	Being Alive
Drugs	Doctors	Poverty	Government
Relapse	Stealing	Races	Gangs
Sex	Creditors	The Unknown	Gossip
Sin	Being Found Out	Abandonment	Wealthy People
Self-Expression	Homosexuals &	Intimacy	Guns
Authority	Lesbians	Disapproval	Change
Heights	Failure	Rejection	
Unemployment	Success	Confrontation	Plus others not listed
Employment	Responsibility	Sobriety	

## Sex Prompts

On page 70 the Big Book says, "To sum up about sex: We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing. If sex is very troublesome, we throw ourselves the harder

into helping others. We think of their needs and work for them. This takes us out of ourselves. It quiets the imperious urge, when to yield would mean heartache."

Abortion	Masochism (Mental or Physical pain on self)	Molesting	Sexual Repression
Adultery	Rape (Statutory or Forced)	Pornography	Fetish
Animal Sex	Same Sex	Prostitution	Transvestism
Incest	Any deviation from normal	Fraud Sex (False Promises)	Plus others not listed
Sadism (Mental or Physical pain on others)		Masturbation	
		Arson (Re: desire)	

## The Sex ideal

*Dear God, please help me to see what YOU want for me regarding relationships with others and my sex life.*

## Prayers in the 4th Step:

*Big Book, page 69*

*“We asked God to help us show them the same tolerance, pity, and patience that we would cheerfully grant a sick friend. When a person offended we said to ourselves, “This is a sick man. How can I be helpful to him? God save me from being angry. Thy will be done.”*

*Big Book, page 67*

*“We ask Him to remove our fear and direct our attention to what He would have us be.”*

*Big Book, page 68*

*“We subjected each relation to this test — was it selfish or not? We asked God to mold our ideals and help us to live up to them.”*

*“In meditation, we ask God what we should do about each specific matter. The right answer will come, if we want it.”*

*Big Book, page 69*

*“We earnestly pray for the right ideal, for guidance in each questionable situation, for sanity, and for the strength to do the right thing.”*

*Big Book, page 70*

## Sharing the Inventory

### Step Five

*“This is the step that separates the men from boys” (or the girls from women). Step Five breaks the pattern of secrets and isolation that have kept us drunk and held down by our disease.”*

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, page 63*

Your Sponsor is one of the tools of the program and like any tool it will not help you if you do not use it appropriately. Your Sponsor will give you some directions on how your Fifth Step will be conducted — the place, time, duration, and process.

Most Fifth Steps are done with the Sponsor and the person whose Fifth Step is being heard separated from distractions. Your Sponsor may want you to go to a special location (your home, the Sponsor's home, a peaceful outdoor location, etc.) to get this personal time — the goal is to remove distractions so you can concentrate on the work of breaking the lifetime habit of keeping the secrets and hiding the truth from yourself and others.

This is when you will use Column Four on your Inventory. It is commonly called “What is Your Part?”

Before taking Step Five we are given some specific directions to review our work so far.

*“If we have been thorough about our personal inventory, we have written down a lot. We have listed and analyzed our resentments. We have begun to comprehend their futility and their*

*fatality. We have commenced to see their terrible destructiveness. We have begun to learn tolerance, patience and good will toward all men, even our enemies, for we look on them as sick people. We have listed the people we have hurt by our conduct, and are willing to straighten out the past if we can.”*

*Big Book, page 70*

*“When we decide who is to hear our story, we waste no time. We have a written inventory and we are prepared for a long talk. We explain to our partner what we are about to do and why we have to do it. He should realize that we are engaged upon a life-and-death errand. Most people approached in this way will be glad to help; they will be honored by our confidence.”*

*Big Book, page 75*

There is no “perfect” Fourth Step — the World Service Office is not reserving a special niche for your inventory to show the world how an inventory should be done. You do your Fourth the very best you can do it and, most often, will find that there is enough relief from the past to move forward with your Recovery.

There is only one way to do it wrong. To not do it!

Your Sponsor will probably ask questions to clarify some of the points you have written. It will be your opportunity to give more detail on the 19 words you were allowed for on your list.

You may be directed to write into the fourth column of the inventory to identify the exact nature of the problem. What was your part in this entry on the Inventory? What does it tell you

about yourself, your personal defects, or your shortcomings?

A Sponsor will usually tell you something of their own story to show how they have had to deal with items from their own Inventory to give you a real example of how a similar problem was handled in the Sponsor's own inventory. Your Sponsor will also guide you away from focus on how others have harmed you, but how you have participated in the process of stepping on their toes and causing them to retaliate. Sometimes a Sponsor will need to point out when you have been taking something as a personal injury that was simply a fact of life affecting others at the same time.

On page 46 of the Twelve and Twelve it says:

"The sponsor probably points out that the newcomer has some assets which can be noted along with his liabilities. This tends to clear away morbidity and encourage balance. As soon as he begins to be more objective, the newcomer can fearlessly, rather than fearfully, look at his own defects."

You do not need to understand the process. This is not about building your intellectual strength, but getting down to the basic, honest feelings that have been the foundation of your resentments, fears, and relationships.

Let your Sponsor guide you and know that there is nothing on your list that does not have a name — and a name means someone else has done it, felt it, or had to deal with it. You are not alone.

It is important that you not try to do a Fifth Step alone. You use an Inventory to focus on your own problems, not the defects of the names on your lists. It is for you, your discovery of your own defects and short-comings, your own spiritual journey, and cleaning your side of the street.

You will most likely think of more to go on an inventory after you do your Fifth Step and it doesn't matter what you call the continuation of your Inventory. The Tenth Step says "Continued to take personal inventory..." so you might want to look at additions as part of your Tenth Step or a new Fourth Step.

You may find there is a particular area of your life where you want to focus on a new inventory — your marriage, secret crimes (such as stealing, hidden judgments, gossip, withholding care or money, or connection with children or parents, etc.). Discuss these with your Sponsor to determine the best way to approach such new housecleanings.

The only thing that matters is doing the Work and putting pen to paper. Just do it. Your Fourth Step is a real milestone in your commitment and progress to your Recovery.

If you've answered the above questions to your satisfaction, you're ready for Steps 6 & 7.

# The Secret Steps

## Step Six

The Big Book only takes a paragraph on doing Step Six:

*“Returning home we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our heart that we know Him better. Taking this book down from our shelf we turn to the page which contains the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall walk a free man at last. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimped on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand? If we can answer to our satisfaction, we then look at Step Six. We have emphasized willingness as being indispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things which we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all, everyone? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing.*

*“When ready, we say something like this:*

*“My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.”*

*“We have then completed Step Seven.*

*“Now we need more action, without which we find that “Faith without works is dead.”*

*“Let’s look at Steps Eight and Nine.”*

We are often unwilling to give up our defects because we get benefits. We manipulate other people to get what we want or we get to avoid what we don't like. We get to be irresponsible and we get to continue our historical indulgence of “me, Me ME!”

What would life be like without these old, comfortable, and familiar defects? Would we be willing to live the life our Higher Power guides us to live?

Would we be willing to live without our indulgence and control that has marked our previous life? And if we are not willing, are we willing to become willing?

- Are you now ready to let God remove from you all the things which you have admitted are objectionable in Steps 4 & 5?
- Can He (God) now take them all — every one of them?
- If we are not entirely ready, we pray for the willingness?

## Step Seven

When you are honestly able to answer those questions “yes,” you are ready to move forward to Step Seven and that Step has even fewer words in the Big Book than Step Six.

If we are ready, we pray the “7th Step Prayer” (page 76):

*“My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen.”*

Remember, the prayers given for Steps Three and Seven say they are only suggestions. You may choose your own words so long as they express the idea behind these two prayers and that those words come from your heart.

Remember “Faith without Works is dead,” but so is “Works without Faith.” Your willingness to give up your old ways, your old desires, and your old defects must be as sincere as you can make it, even if that willingness is not perfect.

In AA, you will see others come in, learn how to quote the Big Book, to parrot back the sayings they hear in meetings, but know that they really only seek the approval of others in their meetings without needing to make a real change.

See also - “The Full Prayer”

# Step Seven Worksheet

One of our visitors asked us if we knew of a Step Seven worksheet. There are, of course, a plethora of such things, most of them for sale somewhere. One of our members was curious about creating something more of a Step 7 think-sheet. And he did. And it's free. And here it is.

*Step 7: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*

## What shortcomings?

The “exact nature of our wrongs” in step 5 is expressed in terms of “defects of character” in step 6, and offered up to God for removal as “shortcomings” in step 7. Bill Wilson, when asked why he used three different sets of words to define character defects, said it was to avoid repetition. Therefore, he intended that there be no significant distinction. Some members waste time needlessly by differentiating the three expressions, which we term, simply, as character defects.

When step 5 is performed well, we leave with a list of our character defects. In step 6, we progressively become willing to have these removed from us, and in step 7, we pray that they might be removed.

Make a grid similar to that below and list your defects of character in it. If an example we have entered applies to you, let it remain. If not, replace it with one of yours that is not listed.

Character Defect	Willingness to have removed
ABUSIVENESS	<input type="checkbox"/>
ANGER	<input type="checkbox"/>
DISHONESTY	<input type="checkbox"/>
FEAR	<input type="checkbox"/>
INFIDELITY	<input type="checkbox"/>
IRRESPONSIBILITY	<input type="checkbox"/>
PROCRASTINATION*	<input type="checkbox"/>
STINGINESS	<input type="checkbox"/>
THIEVERY	<input type="checkbox"/>
THOUGHTLESSNESS/	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Willingness for Removal

We have identified five possible levels of your willingness to have each character defect removed. These are:

- 1) Already removed
- 2) Absolutely willing
- 3) Almost willing
- 4) Give me more time
- 5) Never

Place one of these level indicators in the right column of the grid for each character defect.

As you know from reading the 12&12, our stubborn insistence to “never” allow a defect to be removed must, itself, be removed.

If your willingness level for any item is not 1 or 2, you will want to repeat the exercise again later.

We are certain that God will not remove from alcoholics the defects of character that we do not admit we have. This fact explains one of the reasons we must take steps 4 and 5. We also know that God may remove our defects only to the extent that we are willing for them to be removed. That is why we take step 6. He does not intrude upon our private desires to cohabit with the trash in the garbage can.

## Describe your level of humility

- 1) I am so low I cohabit with worms.
- 2) I deserve contempt and condemnation.
- 3) I am worthless.
- 4) I am filled with guilt, shame, remorse and self-loathing.
- 5) I feel like being totally honest.
- 6) I have little interest in impressing others.
- 7) I have nothing to hide from God
- 8) I am coming to really know who I am.

## Humility?

Are you humble? Place a check mark next to each of the statements in the table which identifies your level of humility?

Even though the dictionary says that humility describes one of lower status that is not the spiritual significance of humility. Therefore, the first four statements above describe humiliation, not humility.

The root is “hum”, the same root as in humus and humor. For us, humility means “down to earth”.

Humility means honest, real, and without phoniness as in statements 5 through 8 above. Our role model, Mother Theresa had it right on when she said, “If you are truly humble, nothing can touch you, neither disgrace nor praise, because you know who you are.”

So, we enter into step 7 with honesty, willing to stand naked, so to speak, before God, hiding nothing, and with no hidden motives.

## More about God

In Step 7, we ask God to do something – to remove our shortcomings. But not all conceptions of a Higher Power (HP) are likely to improve us. Some of the HPs we have encountered are a tree, a moving van, a rock, the classic light bulb, and even the AA Group itself, which is suggested as a last resort starting point in AA literature. Amongst these, the only possible candidate for removing shortcomings might be the AA Group.

However, we think it is not prudent to go through your defects catalogue before your Group. You would be exposing yourself unnecessarily. They would not take the time and, even if they did, you would get all kinds of confused and incompatible reactions from them. At best, the Group, or even your sponsor, might give you some insight into the nature of your wrongs and some remedial possibilities.

So, you might as well bite the bullet and open yourself up to the Spiritual source, which we might as well call “God” for communication purposes. Here is an opportunity for you to identify further your own conception of God. This is not completely a true-false exercise. Some of your responses might require some contemplation. Thinking deeply on these questions is the benefit of doing it.

## Your Own Conception of God

- 1) What is the name of your Higher Power (HP)?
- 2) Where is your HP located?
- 3) What is the primary location of your HP at the time you are meditating or praying?
- 4) If you usually pray on your knees, why do you?
- 5) Can your HP read your thoughts when you pray? Does your HP hear you better when you speak aloud?
- 6) Is your motive underlying the prayer as important as the thoughts and words of the prayer itself?
- 7) Should your message be specific and precise, or is it OK to be vague in your requests to your HP?
- 8) Place a checkmark next to the defects which God is likely to remove?  
 Defects of which you are not aware.  
 Defects that stand in the way of your usefulness to God.  
 Defects that stand in the way of your usefulness to others.  
 Defects that annoy you.

- Defects that interfere with your happiness.
- 9) Once you have asked your HP to remove your defects (shortcomings, will they be gone?)
- 10) Does your HP reward you when you comply with His will?
- 11) Does your HP punish you when you do not comply with His will?
- 12) Is it necessary for you to attend or be a member of a church?

## The Prayer

We are tempted to print out the seventh step prayer for you. However, this is a work sheet. Find the prayer in the Big Book and write all 56 words of it in the space below.

Even if you rephrase the prayer into your own words, the writing will help you double-check your thoroughness.

Does your understanding of the prayer include the meaning of all of the words in the prayer from the book?

#### HANDWRITE THE SEVENTH STEP PRAYER FROM THE BOOK

It is curious to note that we ask only for the removal of defects of character which stand in the way of our usefulness to God and our fellows. What about the ones that are painful to us? (See also "The Full Prayer")

## The Full Prayer

It was not the purpose of either of the Prayers in Steps 3 and 7 to stand on their own.

There is no “Amen” at the end of the Prayer in Step 3. The prayer in Step 7 picks up exactly where the first prayer leaves off.

Between the “two prayers” you do your fourth and fifth steps to break the cycle of secrecy and self-hate that has run our lives to the point where we have placed an appropriate focus on ourselves and the personal defects we must surrender to improve our own lives and the lives of those around us.

As always, the prayers are suggested and it is often more effective to re-word the prayer into your own words, but if all you can do is say the words on paper, try to mean them with your heart.

### Prayer of Steps 3 and 7

*God, I offer myself to you—  
to build with me and to do with me as  
you will.*

*Relieve me of the bondage of self  
that I may better do your will.*

*Take away my difficulties, that victory  
over them may bear witness to those  
I would help of Your Power,  
Your Love, and Your Way of life.*

*May I do your will always!*

*My Creator, I am now willing that you  
should have all of me, good and bad.*

*I pray that you now remove from me  
every single defect of character which  
stands in the way of my usefulness to  
you and my fellows.*

*Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to  
do your bidding.*

*Amen*

# Step 8

It is time now to clear away the wreckage of our past. We do this by making amends and restitution. Restitution is defined as “the giving back of something that was taken away.”

*Step 8: Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*

For Step Eight, we'll give you a guide in order for you to have one last opportunity to be certain that all has been uncovered. Please complete the guide on your own as soon as possible.

Now, please take out your inventory forms, as they are the heart of our Eighth Step amends list. But we also need to ask God to reveal to us any others we have harmed but who are not yet on our list. We'll add their names now as we move on to Step Nine.

*Step 9: Made direct amends to such people, wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*

As part of our effort to be thorough, we must define the word “amend,” and according to dictionary.com, we find:

*a·mend [uh-mend]*

*-verb (used with object)*

1. *to alter, modify, rephrase, or add to or subtract from (a motion, bill, constitution, etc.) by formal procedure: Congress may amend the proposed tax bill.*
2. *to change for the better; improve: to amend one's ways.*
3. *to remove or correct faults in; rectify.*

*-verb (used without object)*

4. *to grow or become better by reforming oneself: He amends day by day.*

## Focus on Others

We can see that our purpose is not just to relieve ourselves of the guilt and shame from the effects of our past actions, but we are to “alter,” “repair,” “to change for the better; improve,” “to correct fault in; rectify” and “become better.”

Moving into our Ninth Step Amends we step from the self-absorption of the first eight steps to the real world. To this point I admitted, I came to believe, I did an inventory, I shared it, I became willing, I asked to have my defects removed, and I made the list of my harms while active in my alcoholism.

But in Step Nine our goal is to heal the damage we have done.

We hurt real people; I did not just hurt “my mother.” Before she ever had me she was a woman with a life and goals and hopes, and I hurt that woman. That real woman.

Now I review my list and come to see these people as independent from me. What do I do to make it better, to improve, to repair, to set right, the real damage I did to these real people. How do I do this without making it more about “me?”

Some people coming into AA are told they do not have to do amends if it will be difficult, embarrassing, or expensive. Many people follow

that direction and, since they have not done the work required by the Step, soon find themselves drunk again – and very surprised.

*“Reminding ourselves that we have decided to go to any lengths to find a spiritual experience, we ask that we be given strength and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences might be.”*

*Big Book, page 79*

To do The Work means to Do The Work! Not come up with reasons why the one attempting to achieve lasting sobriety is different and can explain their way out of doing that work.

In the Ninth Step, we focus on the one we have hurt. Sometimes this means that we have to pay money, lose the reputation we had built by hiding the truth, or even serve time in prison to make amends for a real crime.

But we become free, without the guilt, shame, and doom that comes from continuing our life hiding the truth. We can walk down the street without fear of being exposed, face the people we meet, and know that we have done what was in our power to right our wrongs.

## Into More Action

The amends process is explained as the Big Book tells us what to do next:

*“...Now we go out to our fellows and repair the damage done in the past. We attempt to sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will and run the show ourselves. If we haven't the will to do this, we ask until it comes. Remember, it was agreed at*

*the beginning that we would go to any lengths for victory over alcohol.”*

*Big Book, page 88, 89*

There are five categories of amends. The following are guide lists with the key suggestions in the Big Book for each type. Read Steps Eight and Nine in the Big Book (pages 76 – 84) before using this guide.

The Big Book divides the amends that we need to make into five types. We'll list each of the amends that you need to make according to the type. Then, before approaching anyone, reread the advice offered by the Big Book regarding each type. Also, seek counsel from your sponsor, spiritual advisor, or another member of the group that's gone through the amends process. Finally, pray each morning regarding all the items listed. Now, label each with a plus (+) or a minus (-), depending on your willingness to make the amends — a plus indicating immediate readiness and the minus noting the ones you feel more hesitant about.

## Review

- Whom did I hurt?
- What did I do?
- Where was I at fault?
- Where had I been selfish, dishonest, or inconsiderate?
- Did I arouse: Jealousy? Suspicion? Bitterness?
- What Should I have done differently?

## Types of Amends

### Amend type (a) — People We Hate / Resent

- It may be some have done us more harm than we have done them.
- With a person we dislike, we take the bit in our teeth.
- It is harder to go to an enemy than a friend, but the benefit is greater.
- Go in a helpful, forgiving spirit.
- Do not criticize or argue.
- We are there to sweep off OUR side of the street.
- Nothing can be accomplished until we do so.
- Discuss your faults, not his or hers.
- Be calm, frank, open.
- It doesn't matter if they accept the apology or throw us out of the office. We've done our part.

Now transfer the names from your resentment and other lists, except for family members. Add any other names that have come to you that you have harmed or owe amends.

Write your list.

### Amend type (b) — The People / Institutions / Owed Money

- Most alcoholics owe money.
- We don't dodge anyone.
- In some cases, some of us had to disclose our alcoholism by way of explaining what drove us and what we are now trying to do.
- We do not try to beat anyone out of anything, but we arrange a deal that we can live up to. Arranging time payments has worked for many of us.
- Let them know you're sorry.
- Drinking made us slow to pay.
- If we fear facing our creditors, we often drink.

Write your list.

### **Amend type (c) — Incidents of criminal offense**

- Some of us padded expense accounts, fell behind on child support, wrote bad checks, and committed other offenses of the law.
- We remind ourselves that we must be willing to go to any lengths to correct these mistakes if we are to stay sober.
- We don't have the power to do this.
- We ask God for strength and direction.
- We don't worry about the consequences. We know God will protect us if we try to do the right thing for a change.
- We may lose position or reputation, though most of us have experienced that already.
- We are willing anyway.
- We must not shrink at anything.

Write your list.

### **Amend Type (d) — Incidents of Domestic Trouble**

- We may have committed adultery.
- After years with a drunk, spouses get worn out, resentful, and uncommunicative.
- We begin to feel self-pity (sorry for ourselves).
- So we look around for another, feeling justified, when WE were really the source of the problem in the first place.
- Sometimes that leads to guilt feelings.
- We have to do something about this.
- If the spouse does not know, we do not always say it is best to tell.
- If she knows something, we admit our fault.
- We have no right to name the names of others involved.
- Keep in mind we are dealing with the most horrible human emotion: jealousy.
- Don't risk more combat over this.
- Some think just being sober in the home now is enough. It isn't.
- We have treated spouses and family in a shocking way.
- We have been like a tornado.
- We broke hearts and uprooted affection, and our selfishness kept the home in turmoil.
- Just saying we are sorry will not do.
- We sit with the family and analyze the past, not criticizing any of them.
- Yes, they may have defects, but many of them were inspired by our behaviors.
- We pray each morning for God to show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindness, and love.

Write your list.

## Amend Type (e) — Wrongs We Can Never Fully Right

Be very careful about listing anyone or anything here. We only list someone here if we can HONESTLY say that the wrong cannot be righted, usually when to do so would further injure them or another person. We are willing (or pray for the willingness to become willing) to make the amend if we can.

- If the case is that they cannot be seen, we write them an honest letter.

- We don't delay if it can be avoided.
- We do not have to be scrapping, but we do have to be sensible, tactful, considerate, and humble.

Discuss the circumstances surrounding the amends with your sponsor or the meeting facilitator before you list anyone here.

## Caution Where Others Are Concerned

Sometimes others are involved (spouses, children, other family members). We don't sacrifice them to save ourselves. Before taking drastic action that might affect another, we get their consent, we consult others, and we ask God to help. If the drastic step is still indicated, we move ahead.

This guide may be copied and distributed freely so long as the content is not altered and the price, except for photocopying fees if desired, is not charged.



# Step 9

## Reading for Step Nine

Big Book: Chapter 6, Into Action, from: Page 82, line 17 Thru: Page 84, line 15.

12&12: Step 9

Our experience with Step Nine prompts us to emphasize four ideas about this step.

Token amends will not do! Just what is an amend? Here is what our trusty dictionary says:

**a-mend :**(uh mend') *v. v.t.*

2. *to change for the better; improve.*
3. *to remove or correct faults in; rectify.*
- v.i. <*
4. *to grow or become better by reforming oneself.*

Later in this document you will see an extraction of words and phrases that the authors of the Big Book used to describe what they meant by the word amend. Their true meaning, while including the definition above, is more like the synonyms for the word, rectify:

**rectify :** *v.*

1. *right, set right, put right, make right, correct, adjust, regulate, straighten, square; focus, attune; mend, amend, emend, fix, repair, revise; remedy, redress, cure, reform.*

One might even use the definition of the word, "repair", to express their meaning:

**re-pair :**[1] (ri pâr') *-paired, -pair-ing . v.t.*

1. *to restore to a good or sound condition after decay or damage; mend.*

2. *to restore or renew.*

3. *to remedy; make up for; compensate for.*

Extracted words and phrases as examples of "amends":

**BB** = the Big Book of AA, Alcoholics Anonymous

**12&12** = Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

## Self-Correction

...sweep away the debris which has accumulated out of our effort to live on self-will. [BB, page 76, line 22]

...demonstration of good will [BB, page 77, line 13]

...sweep off our side of the street [BB, page 77, line 32]

...sit down with the family and frankly analyze the past as we now see it. [BB, page 83, line 2]

...We clean house with the family... [BB, page 83, line 7]

...asking each morning in meditation that our Creator show us the way of patience, tolerance, kindliness and love. [BB, page 83, line 8]

...The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it... [BB, page 83, line 11]

...Our behavior will convince them more than our words. [BB, page 83, line 15]

*...There may be some wrongs we can never fully right. [BB, page 83, line 19]*

*...Some people cannot be seen—we send them an honest letter. [BB, page 83, line 22]*

*...We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble without being servile or scraping. [BB, page 83, line 25]*

## Restitution

*...repair the damage [we have] done in the past. [BB, page 76, line 21]*

*...set right the wrong [BB, page 77, line 12]*

*...straighten out the past [BB, page 77, line 32]*

*...arranging the best deal... [of repayment] ... we can [BB, page 78, line 21]*

*...reparations [BB, page 79, line 5]*

*...sent...money [BB, page 79, line 29]*

*...willing to go to jail [BB, page 79, line 30]*

*...make a public statement [BB, page 80, line 15] ... [make]...good to the wife or parents [BB, page 82, line 19]*

*...reconstruction [BB, page 83, line 1]*

## Apology

*...confessing our former ill feeling [BB, page 77, line 27]*

*...expressing our regret [BB, page 77, line 27]*

*...we let these people know we are sorry [BB, page 78, line 21]*

*...admitting faults [BB, page 79, line 28]*

*...admit our fault [BB, page 81, line 21]*

*...asking forgiveness [BB, page 79, line 28]*

*...A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry won't fill the bill at all. [BB, page 83, line 2]*

2. Don't rush into amends without guidance. You can mess up yourself and others unless the best judgment is used. When we are new to

sobriety, our judgment is often not so swift. Please read again the words we offered for Step Eight, which is the planning of your amendment step.

3. Your amends must never harm others. Both of the books make clear that we cannot seek atonement at the expense of others. Be especially careful not to implicate or injure other people in your wrong-doing.

4. Don't forget to take the hidden step – forgiveness. You will recall that in Step Four you listed the people who had harmed you as part of your resentment matrix. None of the steps emphasizes sufficiently that the ultimate process of resentment eradication (and they must be wiped out) is forgiveness of those we resent. If you have not yet cleaned up your resentments, finish them off in Step Nine. It then becomes the double-edged sword that cuts you free from all harms done by you and to you.

However, there is a difference between being forgiven and forgiving. Our amends to those we have harmed are made at our own initiative and directly to the person harmed, whenever possible. On the other hand, when we are forgiving others, it is rarely appropriate to approach them to let them know they are forgiven. Why?

They might have no idea that we have resented them. After all, the resentment is ours. Letting them in on our problem cannot do them any good, and may cause them considerable hurt feelings or aggravation – even anger.

We have been learning not to play God and to avoid ego-serving activities. Approaching others to let them know they are forgiven would usually be thought of as self-serving. This we avoid.

If, on the other hand, the injuring party has let us know that they feel guilt about what they have done, it can often be a true act of kindness to let them know they are off the hook as far as we are concerned. We do this with true humility and compassion. We never give the impression that

they owe us something for our act of forgiveness. We then try to treat them the way we want others to forgive us for our own wrongs.

Some of our members believe that the other side of the forgiveness coin, that we are forgiven for our transgressions, is a necessary goal of Step 9. There is no need at all that we be forgiven by the person we have harmed after we make an amend. If they choose to tell us we are forgiven, that is a fine gesture – one we might cherish. However, the real goal here is that you cease to know guilt stemming from your prior acts or omissions. The removal of guilt is the exclusive domain of your spiritual power.

On your way. Your Step 9 can last from several weeks to many years. Start it when you have finished step 8 and are told to do so. Continue until you are done.

### Promises of Step Nine

Here are the 20 promises starting at the bottom of page 83 in the Big Book. Some people think these are the only promises the Big Book makes. Little do they realize that each step has a set of promises, and that there are many more besides. There are even a few guarantees. Drop us a line if you have found the 173 promises and guarantees in the Big Book that we have found.

*If we are painstaking about this phase of our development,*

***we will be amazed before we are half way through.***

*We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.*

*We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.*

*We will comprehend the word serenity and we will know peace.*

*No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.*

*That feeling of uselessness (will disappear) and self-pity will disappear.*

*We will lose interest in selfish things and (we will gain interest in our fellows.*

*Self-seeking will slip away.*

*Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.*

*Fear of people (will leave us) and (fear) of economic insecurity will leave us.*

*We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.*

*We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.*

*Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly.*

*They will always materialize if we work for them.*

Writing: It would be a good idea to update your amendment plan (Step eight) when each amendment is done. Check it off. Make a note as to their reaction. If an agreement was reached concerning further action on your part, write it down. We even know one sponsor who keeps Step 8 lists of his step partners on a computer (on an encrypted file for total privacy). Every month or so, the list is made current.

## Spot Check Inventory

Am I...	or Am I?
Into self-pity	Grateful for Blessings
Resentful	Forgiving
Critical	Accepting
Suspicious	Trusting
Tactless and Disrespectful	Loving and Understanding
Narrow-Minded	Open-Minded
Avoiding People	Comfortable with Others
Envious	Aware of my own Worth
Pessimistic	Optimistic
Procrastinating	Prompt
Prone to Gossip	Respectful of Other's Privacy
Self-Centered	Helpful to Others
Impulsive and Self-Indulgent	Self-Disciplined
Selfish	Generous
Self-Righteous and Intolerant	Tolerant
Domineering	Considerate
Arrogant	Humble
Impractical	Realistic
Self-Deceiving	Honest with Myself
Impatient	Patient
Stubborn	Willing to Compromise
Aimless and Indifferent	Purposeful
Dishonest	Truthful



# A RECOVERY READER

A GUIDE FOR SPONSORS, STUDENTS & TEACHERS

A COLLECTION OF WRITINGS ON 12-STEP RECOVERY  
FROM THE 1940S TO THE 21ST CENTURY, INCLUDING:

- THE FIRST BOOKLET ON AA SPONSORSHIP BY CLARENCE SNYDER (1944)
- ONE WAY GROUP INVENTORY GUIDE (1959)
- ESSAYS ON SPIRITUALITY, INVENTORY, AND LIVING IN RECOVERY
- ARTICLES AND INDEXES FROM:

BAREFOOTBILLSWORLD.NET/AAHISTORY      SOBER.ORG  
SPONSORMAGAZINE.ORG      ANONYMOUSREVIEW.ORG  
AND MANY INDIVIDUAL AUTHORS



RELEASED UNDER CREATIVE COMMONS SHARE ALIKE, ATTRIBUTION  
AND NO COMMERCIAL USE LICENSE. YOU MAY COPY THE ELECTRONIC  
FILE FOR REDISTRIBUTION TO FRIENDS, OR PHOTOCOPY ANY OR ALL  
OF THE PAGES. DO NOT CHANGE THE MATERIAL.